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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM CATHOLIC HOSPICE DESCRIBES PROBLEMS FROM
CONSTRUCTION NEXT DOOR

1. (SBU) Summary. During an April 25 meeting with ConGen Poloff, the lead attorney for the Hospice Saint Vincent de Paul -- a Vatican-supported institution situated near the Old City of Jerusalem -- appealed for USG intervention with the Government of Israel (GOI) in response to the construction of a neighboring condominium complex and pedestrian shopping area. The attorney accused the GOI of failing to adhere to a 1993 agreement intended to insure hospice control over the lone access road serving the facility and preserving its privacy. The attorney said that the ongoing construction violated the terms of the 1993 agreement, and warned that the hospice may be compelled to cease operations altogether unless it can ensure complete control over the access road. End summary.

Hospice Saint
Vincent de Paul

2. (SBU) The land encompassing the Hospice Saint Vincent de Paul -- located in the Mamila section of West Jerusalem near the Old City -- was purchased by the Roman Catholic Church in 1884. The building complex, which includes a convent, the St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church, a kindergarten, grade school, and child care facility, supports the daily needs of approximately 400 people, including 250 permanent residents composed of abandoned children, senior citizens, and the mentally ill. (Note: The hospice serves mainly Israeli Arabs and East Jerusalem Palestinians but includes some Jewish Israelis, including two residents who escaped from Nazi Germany. End note.) The hospice employs approximately 80 personnel, including doctors, teachers, and social workers. Funding for the facility comes from the Israeli Ministry of Welfare as well as the Vatican and private donors.

Lawyer Says Construction
Violates 1993 Agreement

3. (SBU) Jerusalem attorney Naeem Khoury told ConGen Poloff April 25 that the construction of an upscale condominium complex and pedestrian shopping area adjacent to the hospice violates a 1993 agreement between the GOI and the hospice. According to Khoury, the agreement stipulated that a free motorway be provided for the exclusive use of the hospice for its service and transportation vehicles. The agreement also required that any building construction in the adjacent area ensure the privacy of the convent by restricting the height of the surrounding buildings.

¶4. (SBU) Khoury said that a review of the construction site maps show that the building's main entrance would impede entry by hospice ambulances, buses for the handicapped, and emergency vehicles since it would place access to the facility at the discretion of the condominium. Khoury added that the construction also violates the privacy of the convent since the surrounding buildings are slated to be built higher than the terms agreed to in the 1993 agreement.

Fearing Closure, Attorney
Appeals For USG Intervention

¶5. (SBU) Khoury said that he has initiated legal action in Jerusalem's district court but expressed doubts that he would be successful in delaying the construction during the litigation period. He anticipated that the presiding judge would deny his recent motion to halt the project altogether at the building site. At the current pace of construction, Khoury expected that building construction would be completed sometime in 2008. Khoury warned that the hospice might cease operations unless it secures total control over the access road. He requested USG intervention with the Government of Israel on behalf of the hospice to ensure that the 1993 agreement is upheld.

WALLES